

**Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group  
Meeting Summary  
Monday, September 21, 2009**

**Work Group Members in attendance:**

Kerry Donley  
William Euille  
Jennifer Mitchell  
Noah Teates  
Eric Wagner

**City Staff:**

Rich Baier  
Tom Canfield  
Jeffrey Farner  
Claire Gron  
Mark Jinks  
Sandra Marks

**WMATA Staff:**

John Thomas  
Jim Ashe

Approximately 20 Members of the Public were in attendance.

## **Welcome and Overview**

The Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group (“Work Group”) meeting began at approximately 7:06 p.m. Rich Baier, T&ES, welcomed the Work Group.

Jennifer Mitchell wished to disclose that she has recently joined the firm of Parsons Brinckerhoff, which has been working on the Potomac Yard Metrorail station project. She indicated that she is not working on the project, but is seeking a determination from the City Attorney that there is no conflict of interest.

Mr. Baier introduced Vice Mayor Donley as a new member of the Work Group.

Mayor Euille emphasized that a Metrorail station at Potomac Yard is not imminent.

## **WMATA Presentation**

John Thomas, WMATA, gave a presentation detailing the improvements that would be required for each of the remaining alternatives (alternatives A, B2, and B3), and implications for property owners and easements. He also discussed plans and elevations for each of the alternatives.

Jeffrey Farner, P&Z, discussed why the D alternatives (aerial) are not considered viable, and are no longer being pursued. He explained that the aerial option negatively impacts development in Landbay F, and phasing is a challenge

Mr. Farner mentioned that the City has met with the National Park Service (NPS), and he summarized their concerns, including impacts to NPS property and the scenic easement, the visual impacts of the station on the GW Parkways, and the possibility of low profile design. NPS has requested additional information concerning the different station location alternatives.

Mr. Baier discussed the Federal 4F (NEPA) review that would be required if a station is located on “public benefit property.” The 4F review has a high standard of review: for approval, the applicant must be able to demonstrate that the option presented is the only feasible, prudent, and reasonable option. Vice Mayor Donley noted that a 4F review would be required for both the B2 and B3 options. Eric Wagner questioned if the 4F review would be different if the station is located: 1) on NPS property or 2) within the scenic easement, but not on NPS property. Mr. Baier stated that there is no major difference. Vice Mayor Donley asked how long the 4F review might take. Jim Ashe, WMATA, stated that the process would take at least a year.

Mr. Wagner questioned how the City might make the case that the B options are the only feasible options. Mr. Baier stated that the burden will be on the City to demonstrate why the current reservation area (option A) would not be feasible and/or prudent.

## **Fiscal Analysis**

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager, presented the fiscal analysis. He stated that the proposed density upon which the fiscal analysis was based is the same as what was previously presented in May. A revised fiscal analysis is forthcoming based on revised densities. Either scenario has the same general challenge: in the long term, there is a tax revenue surplus due to the construction of a Metrorail station at Potomac Yard. However, in the short term, there is a significant funding gap.

In response to a question from Mr. Wagner, Mr. Jinks specified that the fiscal analysis assumed a 15-year build out. Mr. Wagner stated that a 15-year build out is very aggressive.

David Fromm, a member of the audience, questioned if the fiscal analysis changes based on the location of the station. Mr. Jinks stated that the fiscal analysis changes under each scenario because of the different densities and uses within the ¼ watershed of each station location. He stated that the biggest funding gap in the short term occurs with the D (aerial) option. He stated that traditional funding options, such as the Federal government or VDOT, are no longer available.

Mr. Jinks discussed feedback from the property owners concerning the Metrorail station. He stated that the interests of the property owners and the City are not aligned. He noted that staff will continue to work with the developer of Landbay F to determine the developer contribution.

Mr. Fromm stated that the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group (PYPAG) has been proceeding under the assumption that the Metrorail station is a given. He questioned what level of development could be supported on the site if a Metrorail station is not constructed. Noah Teates wondered what development could be supported with and without streetcar. Mr. Fromm questioned if the focus of the PYPAG needed to change. Mr. Wagner stated that PYPAG could proceed in one of two ways: they could assume that a Metrorail station will never be constructed at Potomac Yard, or they could phase development so as not to preclude the construction of a Metrorail station some time in the future.

Mr. Baier noted that, as the City discusses financing a Metrorail station, to remember that major sewage infrastructure improvements will be needed to support the proposed development at Potomac Yard.

Mayor Euille laid out next steps for the group. He stated that the Potomac Yard Metrorail Station Feasibility Work Group, the PYPAG, and City Council need to come together, make a determination concerning the construction of a Metrorail station, and keep things moving forward.

Vice Mayor Donley stated that the group needs to see timelines which consider the 4F review and construction, and a revised fiscal analysis which reflects the timeline. He stated that the group needs to make a decision sooner than later.

Mr. Baier asked the group if were ready to forward a recommendation to PYPAG concerning the Metrorail station location. Mr. Wagner stated that the group needs more information, and is not in a position to make a decision. He stated that staff needs additional time to look at the options to determine whether or not there are reasonable alternatives.

Mr. Thomas stated that the City does not want to go into the 4F review with only one “build” and the “no build”. Vice Mayor Donley stated that options C2, D1, and D2 are off the table. Mr. Baier stated that the group should choose their two strongest options to move forward through the 4F review along with the “no build” option.

Jennifer Mitchell stated that the group should provide guidance to PYPAG, which should examine phasing and development milestones, and move forward with planning for the density that would be achievable without Metro.

Mr. Wagner and Vice Mayor Donley stated that they felt options B3 and A should move forward to the 4F review along with the “no build” option.

**Public Comment**

A member of the audience, asked if it would be possible to develop a flowchart of the Metro process detailing key NPS, WMATA, and 4F (NEPA) decision points.

Another member of the audience noted the cost overruns associated with the construction of the infill Metrorail station at New York Avenue. Mr. Thomas stated that the New York Avenue experience has influenced the cost estimates for a Metrorail station at Potomac Yard.

Ms. Mitchell questioned if there was any merit to adjusting the midpoint of construction in the WMATA cost estimates. Mr. Thomas stated that the cost estimates should be revised at this time based on a new expected midpoint of construction.